

NOTES ON *PSALTODA MOERENS* (GERMAR) (HEMIPTERA: CICADIDAE) IN TASMANIA

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Abstract

Large numbers of redeye cicadas, *Psaltoda moerens* (Germar), are recorded from northeast Tasmania during the summer of 1995. Few published records exist for this species in Tasmania, suggesting a very sporadic occurrence of this insect.

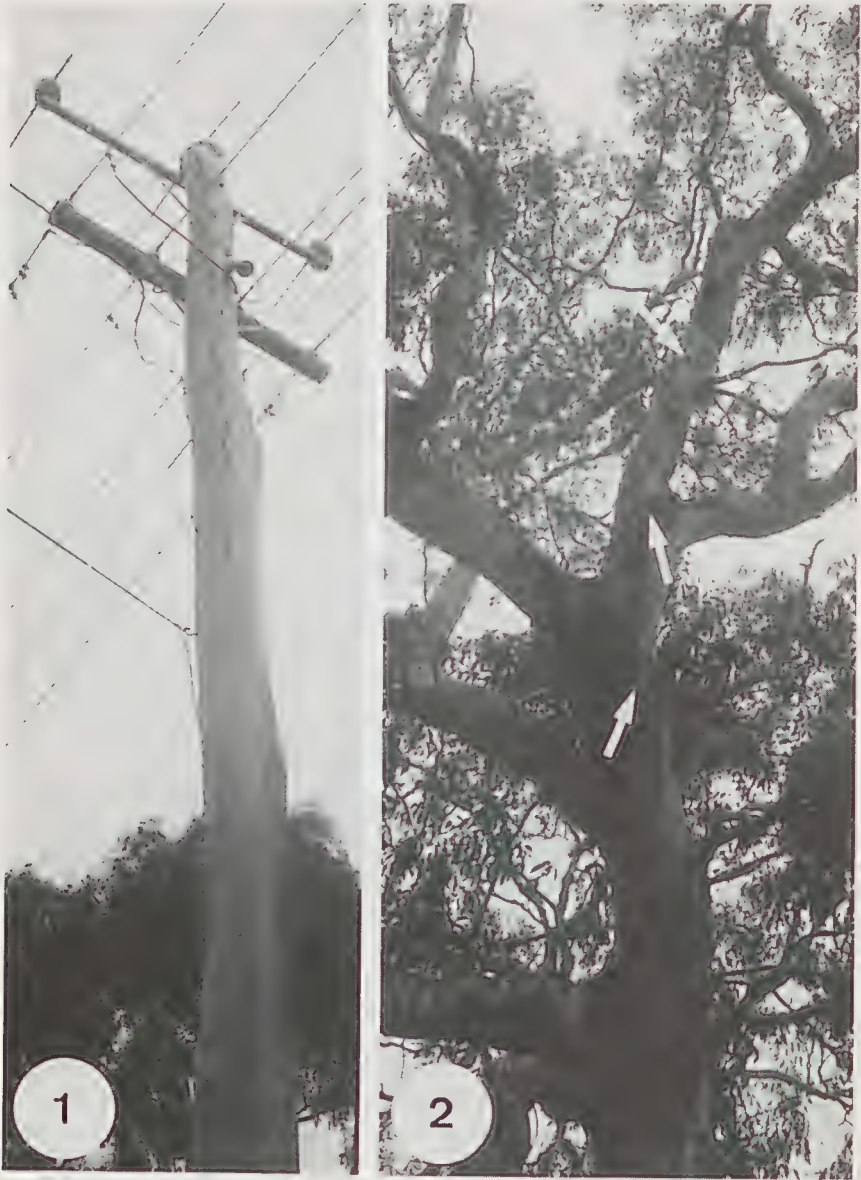
Introduction

Redeyes, *Psaltoda moerens* (Germar), are large cicadas endemic to much of southeastern Australia (Moulds 1990). According to Moulds (1990), adults are sporadic in their occurrence and few records exist concerning the timing and location of outbreaks. Similarly, in Tasmania Elliott and deLittle (1985) noted that this species can be 'present in plague proportions' during 'some years'. Martyn *et al.* (1975) reported 'numerous [*P. moerens*] on *Acacia* sp. wattle, Port Sorell and common George Town, December; collected Scottsdale, January' during the summer of 1973-74. In the summer of 1978-79 Hardy *et al.* (1980) 'found [*P. moerens*] at Dodges Ferry, December'. According to an anonymous source, *P. moerens* was also 'locally abundant during the summer of 1991-92' (MJS, *in lit.*) These records represent all available information concerning outbreaks of *P. moerens* in Tasmania.

Observations

During the period 26-30 December 1995, large numbers of *P. moerens* were seen on power poles (Fig. 1) and trees at Skeleton Bay (41°15'S 148°19'E), Tasmania. Adults aggregated on *Eucalyptus amygdalina* Labill. and *E. viminalis* Labill. (Fig. 2), causing considerable amounts of manna to be exuded from the latter. Voucher specimens collected on 28 December are in the author's collection. Most egg slits observed were drilled on those sides of hosts most exposed to afternoon sun, which is in keeping with the heliotropic behaviour exhibited by many cicada species (Coombs 1996). On the afternoon of 31 December 1995, characteristic songs from large populations of *P. moerens* were heard at Deviot (41°14'S 146°55'E), some 115 km west of Skeleton Bay. The Skeleton Bay location was on the coast while the Deviot location was on the banks of the Tamar River, some 25 km inland.

During Christmas 1990-91, many *P. moerens* were observed on black wattles, *Acacia mearnsii* De Wild., at Dodges Ferry (42°51'S 147°38'E). Adults were evidently feeding upon this host as much watery excreta was being produced. This feeding record adds another host to the diverse list of



Figs 1-2. *Psaltoda moerens* adults: (1) on a power pole at Skeleton Bay, 28.xii.1995; (2) on *Eucalyptus viminalis* at Skeleton Bay, 28.xii.1995, with manna exuding from branches apparent as white streaks (position of insects indicated by arrows).

plant species given by Moulds (1990). This locality was also adjacent to the coast.

Discussion

The above records add to the few that exist for *P. moerens* in Tasmania and support comments by Moulds (1990) and Elliott and deLittle (1985) that the species is sporadic in its occurrence. Specific surveying for this insect, such as that conducted by Coombs (1996), would provide more reliable details concerning occurrence and may explain the sporadic incidence of this species. This would appear to provide a very interesting area for further research. At sites near Armidale NSW, Coombs (1996) reported finding *P. moerens* in 3 out of the 4 years of surveying, with the duration of activity covering the period from the second week of December to the second week of February. In addition, the Skeleton Bay, Deviot and Dodges Ferry locations are within 30 km of the sea, which agrees with Tasmanian collection records of *P. moerens* (Moulds 1990).

Sporadic species such as *P. moerens* are difficult to monitor and publications such as the 'Insect Pest Survey' (Martyn *et al.* 1975, Hardy *et al.* 1980) provide a means of recording the incidence and perhaps abundance of insects which may not be locally common for extended periods. A similar publication would be invaluable for insects important to forestry, for example, and would negate reliance upon the memories of forest entomologists, avoid loss of such knowledge following staff changes and provide wider access to such information.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Sue and John Briginshaw (Skeleton Bay), Ian Kitchener (Deviot) and Gus and Sue Steinbauer for their hospitality over the Christmas holidays concerned.

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